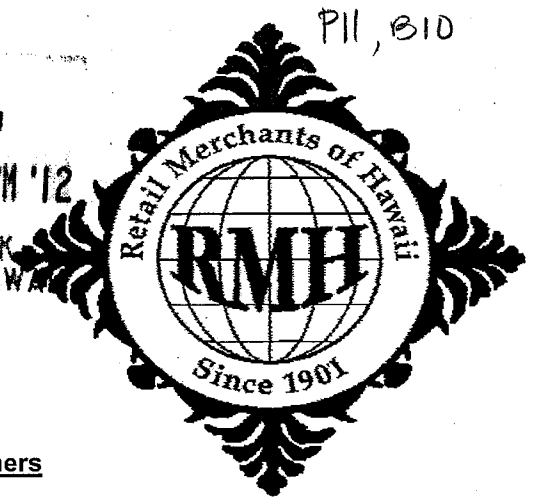


Council Member Ernest Y. Martin, Chair & Presiding Officer
Council Member Ikaika Anderson, Vice Chair
City Council, City & County of Honolulu
Kapolei Hale, Kapolei, HI 96707

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(HONOLULU, HAWAII)



HEARING Wednesday, February 15, 2012
10:00 am
Conference Rooms A, B, and C

RE: **Bill 10 (2012), Relating to the Use of Bags Provided to Customers**

Chair Martin, Vice Chair Anderson, and Members of the Honolulu City Council:

Retail Merchants of Hawaii (RMH) is a not-for-profit trade organization representing 200 members and over 2,000 storefronts, and is committed to support the retail industry and business in general in Hawaii. The retail industry is the one of the largest employers in the state, employing almost 25% of the labor force.

RMH stands in strong opposition to this proposal that prohibits businesses from providing nonbiodegradeable plastic bags to their customers at the point of sale.

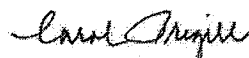
With the exception of reusable bags, the stated preferable alternatives in this bill, recyclable paper bags and compostable bags, are NOT viable substitutes and have serious negative environmental and higher cost implications. In the counties which have banned plastic bags, many businesses have opted to provide paper bags. Suppliers report that the number of paper bags sold to merchants is double that of plastic – consumers request that cashiers “double-bag” their groceries to prevent breakage.

Recyclable paper bags are up to ten times more expensive than plastic, in actual purchase price and in increased shipping costs to Hawaii. For every one truck that delivers plastic bags, seven trucks are needed to deliver the same number of paper bags; this volume measure is critical for ocean freight. These costs will be passed on to the consumer. Additionally, there are serious environmental impacts of air and water pollution and green house gas emissions with the proposed alternatives. From the ULS Report (<http://use-less-stuff.com/research.htm>): paper bags generate 70% more air and 50 times more water pollutants than plastic bags.

Compostable bags: The Biodegradable Products Institute's website provides this statement: Compostable bags are designed to disintegrate and biodegrade quickly and safely **when composted in a professionally managed composting facility**. Lacking this kind of facility, these bags will have the same impact on the landfill as paper bags.

We respectfully ask your consideration of measures (HD2260, HD1 and SB2511) currently moving in the Hawaii legislature that essentially levy a 10-cent fee on single-use bags, with the goals of reducing the environmental impact of both paper and plastic AND creating a dedicated source of funding for watershed protection, restoration and reacquisition. We believe this legislation will achieve your objective to regulate nonbiodegradeable plastic bags as well as other single-use bags without adding financial burden to Honolulu's already strained budget.

At this point, retailers already are balancing three different sets of regulations with which they must comply. The cost impact of four different ordinances and one statute will be tremendous. Hawaii's retailers unquestionably support initiatives to preserve and protect our environment. We respectfully ask that you hold Bill 10. Thank you for the opportunity to comment on this measure.



Carol Pregill, President